

LAWYERS FOR YES – FINAL STATEMENT

On the final day of this referendum campaign, Lawyers for Yes return to the point from which we began. In our document, 'Lawyers for Yes: The Case for Marriage Equality', published on 23rd April 2015, we explained what lies at the core of the 34th Amendment to our Constitution – a desire to extend the right to marry to a category of our citizens to whom it is currently denied.

Marriage has a special place in the Irish Constitution. The pledge to guard with special care and protect against attack the institution of marriage reflects the esteem in which it is held, and its value as a public good. By the grant of a marriage certificate, the State recognises the committed, loyal and enduring relationship of spouses. But it also recognises that such relationships are of value to society as a whole, because by their exchange of vows, spouses commit to furnishing emotional and spiritual support to one another; they commit to providing physical care, financial support and assistance in running their common household.

At the heart of this debate lies the indisputable fact that gays and lesbian couples are equally capable of forming such relationships. To refuse them access to civil marriage is to deny this fact; it is to say that their relationships are less valuable to society, less worthy of society's recognition.

Such denial does not just affect gay and lesbian people in their relationships, but also affects them as individuals. For it says to each and every gay and lesbian person, no matter where life leads you, you will never qualify for access to our most prized institution; you can never aspire to it; you are not worthy of it.

Tomorrow's vote is about recognising that same-sex relationships are equally valuable to society, and affirming that they are equally valued by society. And in recognising and affirming these things, the 34th Amendment to our Constitution will, above all else, embrace with equal dignity and constitutional protection all gay and lesbian citizens. And that will enhance the dignity of us all.

Lawyers for Yes
21st May 2015